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Narrated Identity through Indigeneity: An analysis of Zoe Brooks' Mother of wolves as a
Gender Discourse

Abstract: To understand the interrelated notions of Gender, Culture, ethnicity, and feminism, one has to travel through the life of indigenous people. This paper focuses on these aspects as it is incorporated in the British novelist Zoe Brooks' novel Mother of Wolves. The study reflects how the writer used various devices of narratology to foreground and highlight these aspects. The paper traces the forces that drive women in tribal community to accept the socio and cultural space created for them by the patriarchal world and how they regained strength to reassert their privileged position once they enjoyed. Women's literary contributions to the contemporary world have made a deep impact on the socio cultural ambience of the time. Though Zoe Brooks broaden the genre of magical realism through her writings, the novel Mother of Wolves exhibits the subjects, motifs and problems needs to be addressed and explored as to challenge the existing gender norms. The study underscores how the writer captures the clash between hegemonic values and women consciousness through textual narratives.

Key Words: Gender, Feminism, Narratology, Identity, Other

In all civilization the female identity is formed according to patriarchal codes as they determine the correct and acceptable ways of women's life. Colonial world is not an exception where women are the victims of double oppression. Under the guise of protectors and benefactors men propagate a deceptive illusion that women are in a world where they can enjoy freedom and choice. Gradual realization about a world of confinement and restriction leads to protest. Consequentially different ways have been adopted by women to create and disseminate awareness about feminine oppression. Many women intuited that literature is a powerful medium to explore and express feminine consciousness. Prabha Ganorkar in her essay "A Language of My Own: Language, Self and Representation" has vocalized the calling and mentions as :

The creation of the self takes place at various levels. One is that which is created by the individual by herself, the second is that created by people around and the third is created through representation. ... Within the politics of culture and of gender, the feminine self realizes that she is being othered at different levels. It is through literature that she finds a tool to express herself, her ideas about her 'self', define what she is and also rebel against a representation that is problematic. (Jain, 370-371)

Narratology, which stems from structuralism and semiotics plays a major role in discourse analysis and it helps to understand, analyze and evaluate narratives. It functions as a connective between the story and the discourse. Narratology helps to trace the different aspects of a story and gives cause for speculation in a narrative. It works in a discourse to foreground a certain perspective or idea and thus enables us to find out various possibilities and ways of the narrative.

In this paper I investigate the techniques of narratology used in Zoe Brook's novel *Mother of Wolves* (2012), located in an indigenous tribal society bound by primitivism, myths, and ethnical practices and believe.

Patterns of female traits like deference, compassion, tolerance, sensitivity, nurturance, silence etc though not universally identical, exist in each culture that have traditionally been cited as feminine. In a way these are parameters laid out by the patriarchal world to confine the socio cultural space of women. The novel *Mother of Wolves* begins with an innuendo of the traditional gender role of Lupa, the wife of King of Roads, when she talks to her husband Toro, the King of the tribal group about the clan's decision on having a meeting with the white people.

Lupa, that's enough. This is man's business, now don't go fretting over it.

Besides, Uncle has arranged the meeting. Everything will go brilliantly, you'll see.(8)

The words of Toro is spilled with dominance, power, authority, superiority, control etc which resonate with the masculine traits.

The existing patriarchal society along with colonialism subjugates women and constructs a cultural space for them. In the words of Beauvoir

She (woman) is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute- she is the other. (Beauvoir, 16)

The process of colonization has exerted great impact on the lives of tribal people, but its drastic effect has fallen upon the life of women. Their life becomes vulnerable both within and outside the community.

In their words we saw their sadness, desperation, anger and pain, but we also saw their strength, courage, wisdom and hope. Throughout history, Aboriginal

women have made adjustments to cope with the circumstances facing them, and they continue to do so today. (RCAP, 7)

These words of Royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples reflects the harsh realities of the indigenous life.

In the novel when Toro was murdered as a result of treachery by his Uncle along with the White People, it is his wife, Lupa and the three children become desolate. She has been exposed to patriarchal stratagem and deprived off inherited rights, land, identity and community. But she was not ready to yield to her communities man made norms and she protested in way that any man can imagine. She avenged the death of her husband and reminded the tribal community about an age where women were highly respected and their opinions were taken and considered. It is with the colonization the position and role of tribal women has been changed and their position has been displaced, degraded and devalued.

Lupa is actually a rebel who refuses to give herself to her communities' male dominated norms instead of that she showed wisdom, courage and hope to retaliate against the injustice of society and against the assault on dignity of her 'self'. Mridula Garg in her essay *Women as Society in Literature* portrays the idea of victim- guilt syndrome that women faced in the initial period of their protest and their ability to overcome the dilemma which leads them to gradually pursue and persist their dissent.

Women quickly assimilated the fact that the real war was not between the sexes or genders but between an oppressive value system and the forces demanding an equality of opportunity. The oppressive value system was an adjunct of the inequitable class and caste systems.... Once this was understood, it was easy to see that the so-called women issues were, in fact social issues. The female protagonist that the women writers choose to write about, dealt with the bigger picture. They emphasized the changes needed in

the economic and political systems, to deal with the degradation of environment and of the human psyche. (Jain, 359)

Silence, one of the traditional feminine traits attributed to women by the society functions as a powerful narrative device in the novel. Lupa, even though she realized the traitors in her community she remained silent and waited for the right moment. She used her silence as a protective mantle to escape from her own people and landed in a safe zone with her children. She realized her real potential and sought a new personality and decides to use her body as an avenging tool. Thus she becomes the wife of the captain of the Guards.

Another narrative technique that needs to be highlighted is the use of own resources. Being a tribal woman she is possessed with indigenous knowledge, which is unique to a particular community. With the knowledge she domesticated the wolves and nurtured them as her own children, which in turn helps her to fulfill her intention.

The way Zoo Brookes renders the life of Lupa, the planning and fulfilling her revenge, reflects the cultural, structural and magical elements employed in the novel which strengthens the narrative. Narratology utilized in the narration enumerates rich meaning and depth to the discourse. Roland Barthes explains the need of and significance of meaning in story as:

Narrative does not show, does not imitate; the passion which may excite us in reading a novel is not that of a 'vision' (in actual fact, we do not 'see' anything). Rather it is that of meaning, that of a higher order of relation which also has its emotions, its hopes, its dangers, its triumphs. (Barthes, 124)

Zoe Brook's novel *Mother of Wolves* perfectly carries the third world consciousness as it showcases the female struggle and resistance to confront humiliation and abasement imposed on them. To foreground and highlight these facet of the discourse, the devices of narratology helps to create a 'writerly' text than a 'readerly' approach to text.

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